

The C E A CRITIC

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October, 1948

ANNUAL MEETING

Date: December 28, 1948. Place: Columbia University

Program

10:00 A. M. Registration (Harkness Theatre).

11:00 A. M. **Shakespeare For The Undergraduates** (Harkness Theatre)

Main Speaker: G. Ian Duthie, McGill University

Chairman and Leader of Discussion: Gordon Keith Chalmers, President, Kenyon College

12:30 P. M. Luncheon (Men's Faculty Club)

Speaker: Glenway Wescott, **A Writer's View Of Teaching Literature**

Chairman and Leader of Discussion: President Theodore Spencer, Harvard University

2:00 P. M. **The Ph. D. — Past, Present, and Future** (Harkness Theatre). A Panel Discussion. Speakers: Sanford Meech, Syracuse University; Emery Neff, Columbia University; Theodore Spencer, Harvard University; W. L. Werner, Pennsylvania State College.

N. B. Members are asked to submit topics for discussion at the afternoon panel. They should address the Secretary.

The price of the luncheon will be \$2.50. Reservations should be addressed to the Treasurer, Professor William A. Owens, Columbia University, New York 27, New York.

Enjoy the C.E.A. Annual Meeting! Enjoy an extra night in New York.

NEW ENGLAND MEETING

Date: November 27, 1948. Place: Library, Harvard Faculty Club, Quincy Street, Cambridge, Mass.

Program

9:00-9:30 Registration.

9:30-10:00 Opening Meeting.

Presiding, Walter Simmons, R. I. State, President New England and C.E.A.

Greetings, Howard Mumford Jones, Harvard University.

10:00-11:15 **Writers as Teachers of English**—John Holmes, Tufts; Gerald Brace, B.U.; May Sarton; Roberta Grahame, Wellesley, David Morton.

11:15-12:30 **The Ancient and Other Foreign Classics and The College Curriculum in English**—G. Harris Dagget, Univ. of N. H.; Alvan S. Ryan, Univ. of Mass. at Fort Devens; Leland Wilson, R. I. State; John H. Finley, Harvard; Alan McGee, Mt. Holyoke, Chairman

12:30-2:00 Luncheon, Harvard Faculty Club

Speakers: Robert M. Gay; F. Cudworth Flint, Dartmouth.

2:15-3:30 **Work in Progress in American Literature**: Daniel Aaron, Smith College; Odell Shepard; Kenneth W. Cameron, Trinity, Chairman

3:30-5:00 **Teaching the Novel**: Alexander Cowie, Wesleyan; L. Barber, Amherst; Harry Levin, Harvard. Carl J. Weber, Colby, Chairman

5:00-5:30 Business Meeting

6:00 Dinner

Presiding: President Theodore Spencer, Harvard University

Speaker: Ludwig Lewisohn, Brandeis University

Professor Simmons, elected Vice President at the Boston Meeting in 1947, succeeded to the Presidency when Professor Sidney McLean resigned to go on leave for the fall semester

Professor Maxwell H. Goldberg, Univ. of Mass., Amherst, Mass., is Chairman of the Program Committee

American Influence On Italy

American influence on Italian culture is not a purely post-war phenomenon, due to the prominence of the United States in world affairs. Ever since the rise of Italy as a united nation in the seventies of last century, Italians have made every effort to break out from the provincialism which restricted the country's outlook for generations, and to keep abreast with intellectual developments in other countries. Italians turned first to their two immediate and powerful neighbours to the North, France and Germany: the former was then prominent in creative literature, poetry and the arts, and largely influenced Italian activity in these fields; while Germany was then prominent in science and the scientific study of the humanities—in philosophy and philology and historical criticism—and Italy went to school with the Germans in these subjects. The Anglo-Saxon world remained for a time rather less directly influential, and knowledge of England and of America was less cultivated, though not neglected. It is for instance significant that a scholar like Eugenio Camerini, who devoted most of his life to the study of old Italian texts and the publishing of cheap reprints of Renaissance writers, should also give some attention to American writers and devote essays to Emerson and Irving. And it is natural that Longfellow should receive, in return for his great love for Italian literature, most attention from Italian critics and scholars of the nineteenth century.

But as the twentieth century dawned and the intellectual horizon of Italy widened still more, the interest of the Italian reading public for foreign literature became still more intense. By the time of the first world war, translations were beginning to occupy an increasingly greater place in publishers' lists, and by the second world war the appetite for translations from all literatures—and America one of the leaders—had become so great, that if you took up a catalogue of some popular fiction series, such as the *Medusa*, you found that the translations far outnumber the originals. (Continued on Page 4)

Retrospect and Reflections

(Address at the Spring Meeting at Wells College of the New York Group of C. E. A.)

Whether or not it be true that years bring the philosophic mind, it is certainly true that they bring a host of memories. Having now arrived at an age at which I can say with Mark Twain that although as a young man I could remember anything whether it happened or not, now I can remember only the things that never happened, I find myself more and more inclined to those musings on the past which I fear mark the approach of senility.

When the study of literature in the classical tongues declined, it was but natural that the professors, notoriously timid and conventional, chose the materials on which the young idea was to cut its literary eye teeth from the prestige-burdened heritage of that island which there'll ever be. But even English literature was slow in being recognized. As late as 1914 H. S. Canby could say in a *Yale Review* (October, 1914) essay on English teaching that the profession of teaching English literature was one of the newest professions.

There was little awareness of the possibility of exploring in English the great corpus of literature outside the Anglo-American tradition. A few compilers of readers did include a slim representation of German letters. For example, G. S. Hillard, in his *First Class Reader*, published in 1855, has short extracts from Herder, Uhland, and Follen. No Goethe, of course; Boston thought him immoral, and—more surprising—no Schiller.

Somewhere in this happy land there may be a doctoral monograph which would tell us just how in the course of time the college introductory course in literature in English came to be placed in the year of the "wise fools", a year which, from my acquaintance with sophomores, seems to me probably the worst of the undergraduate course for this introduction. But apparently by 1900 the tradition was well established. And, despite misgivings, it is still maintained.

In general this "sophomore (Continued on Page 5)

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Application for entry as Second Class

matter at Mineola, N. Y., is pending.

"Little of Value"?

"Last Spring, I discovered that (our) teachers, especially in the field of the sciences, are skeptical of the effectiveness of literature teachers. They seem to base their opinion on the fact that college graduates read little of value". (From a letter to the editor.) No doubt that "little of value" includes works on science and the contemporary social scene, as well as plays, novels and poetry. But why blame the English Department that few read Whitehead or Malinowski?

Still, we English teachers are partly to blame for being held to such ridiculous standards. Haven't we in the main set the presumed limits of our effectiveness? Our colleagues are merely accepting us at our word. We like to claim for all students what is true for perhaps half, particularly in our teaching of literature. We claim for a swift dip into literature what can be wholly true only for a strong infusion. (We know the truth, but we maintain a bold front.) We claim for close attention to the matrix of literature what

can be true only for a vision of the gem. (What do we demand on examinations and term papers?) We claim after-effects of our teaching that we know do not follow.

Let us accept our limitations frankly, and not only such obvious ones as **too little time** and **poorly prepared students**. Let us stop carrying self-imposed burdens. Courses in Science can make a student a much more understanding citizen, but they frequently do not. Courses in Social Science ought to make students wiser in the ways of our society and government, but How Many? and How Much? We in English give students an opportunity to improve their writing; almost all of them do improve, some more and some not much. But unless they continue to practice, their skill declines rapidly, and in most of them it does decline. We try to show our students the delight and the wisdom that may be found in literature, and here, too, our success varies greatly. But the end is good, and if General Education in a Democracy is to be valid, that end is surely part of its goal.

In considering the achievement of that end, we may well ponder de Tocqueville's comment on education in a democracy: "What is done is often imperfect, but the attempts are innumerable; and, although, the results of individual effort are very small, the total amount is always very large". That is true both for English teachers, and for "teachers, especially in the fields of the sciences."

Eastern Penna. C. E. A.

On Saturday, October 30, 1948, the Eastern Pennsylvania Section of C. E. A. held its organizing meeting at Pennsylvania Military College, Chester, Pennsylvania. In charge was Professor Dean B. Arnold. Program:

10:30 a.m. Registration and Greeting.

11:30 a.m. "The English Program and General Education". Francis Mason, Gettysburg College.

12:30 p.m. Lunch in College dining room.

1:30 p.m. "The Reading Problem at the College Level", Emmett A. Betts, Temple University.

California C.E.A.

On Saturday, October 30, 1948, the California Group held its first meeting at Occidental College, Los Angeles. Professor Percy H. Houston of Occidental, was in charge of arrangements.

BULLETIN BOARD

To receive Second Class Mailing privileges, a publication must be subscribed for specifically, and not merely received as part of the presumed benefits of paying dues to an Association which issues the publication. It will be necessary, therefore, at the Annual Meeting on December 28, 1948, for the Association to pass the following resolution and make it a part of the by-laws: 'Resolved, that a copy of each issue of "The C E A CRITIC" shall be sent to each member of the College English Association, and that each member shall pay of his annual membership dues of \$2.00, \$1.50 as a year's subscription to "The C E A CRITIC".'

Epigramata, a collection of Greek inscriptions in verse, by Paul Friedlander, professor of Latin and Greek at UCLA, was recently published by the University of California Press. The most famous of the inscriptions is the memorial to the three hundred Spartans who lost their lives in the Battle of Thermopylae:

"Tell them in Lacedaemon,
passer-by

That here obedient to their
law we lie."

Dodd, Mead and Co. announces the opening of the 1949 Intercollegiate Literary Contest to be awarded to the undergraduate submitting the most promising project for a novel. Applications and projects must be received by the publisher by April 15, 1949.

Dr. Charles A. Ford, Dean of the Community College and Technology Institute at Temple University, has been appointed Editor-in-Chief of the John C. Winston Co. Educational Dept., and has resigned his Deanship.

Dear Mr. Editor:

It was nice to have the **Critic** follow me here and to read Cleanth Brooks' challenging (but ambiguous) article tonight. But it was a little sad to take note of the request for dues, since I shall have to forgo membership now. You see, I have given up teaching and am earning my living, such as it is, in a factory; I simply cannot afford the membership any more, and I am probably ineligible anyway. I should add that I am not sad at leaving the profession, even though I loved my work and felt successful at it; though I was bitter at the non-recognition of my specialty (creative writing) and at —'s failure to live up to its own protestations

of the importance of humanities. I also felt strongly that I was ever going to write the things that are in me I'd have to give up the critical approach and the vicarious effort of creative teaching. If I can only keep my head above water financially, I think I'll make out all right. But I might be forced back into the profession. . . . I hope not. Very sincerely yours,
Name Withheld

This year's program of Preceptorial Studies (at Colgate where freshman English has been abolished) seems to be off to a very good start (Sept. 25). We now get the freshmen to do some reading before they enter (mostly on the nature of a liberal education and the challenge to educate themselves), meet them socially when they arrive, and then — almost immediately — treat them like adults by throwing a problem at them. They then write a paper about it, and we follow up through individual conferences and group discussions. . . . What other colleges have dropped the conventional required "freshman English"?

Strang Lawson

The problem was to write a carefully considered statement about Dr. Einstein's message to the World Congress of Intellectuals.

The Sixth Annual Reading Clinic Institute will be held at Temple University January 31 to February 4, inclusive, 1949.

The University of Toledo has published a handsome brochure, "The Age of Enlightenment", Proceedings of the Humanities Institute sponsored by the University and the Toledo Museum of Art. The booklet contains addresses by Professor Herbert Wallace Schneider, Columbia, and Professor Chauncey Brewster Tinker, Yale. Those interested may receive a copy while the supply lasts by writing for one to Mr. Brenton Stevenson, Director of Publications. Prof. Tinker says, "It seems to me that any period which thus finds its material for poetry and the arts within itself is in no improper sense, one of enlightenment."

Virginia, West Virginia,
North Carolina Group

This C.E.A. Group met at Duke University, October 22. Speakers at the morning session were Professors Archibald A. Hill and Atcheson L. Hench. Luncheon speaker, Walter Prichard Eaton. Afternoon speaker, Katherine Gilbert. The editor hopes for a full report of the meeting.

OPAQUE PROJECTOR

Donald J. Lloyd, instructor in English at Oberlin College for the past four years, has experimented with visual aid equipment in an English composition course for a year and a half. He has required members of the class to turn in at least one four by six-inch filing card at each class period. On these they may write as much or as little as they wish, in prose or verse, illustrated or not, on any topic that interests them. Lloyd does not grade the work on the cards or make any corrections of it.

The cards are fed into an opaque projector which throws the material, greatly enlarged, on a wall screen. The class then comments freely and frankly, without knowing whose work it is discussing. When all student comments have been made, Lloyd expresses his own opinions.

During the term, Lloyd requires four or five formal themes on standard paper which he marks, grades and returns. They are tied to the reading the class does and are preceded by weeks of exploration of the general subject to be treated. In the first semester of the course the class studies the English language in America — what it has become, how it is used and misused, and what its capabilities are. In the second semester, the general subject is higher education, and the writers used are Plato, Newman, Arnold, Huxley, and Ruskin.

"I can recommend the use of the machine and the cards to any teacher of English," Lloyd concludes, "especially to one bored with his work. It makes for an amusing, interesting class period."

Mr. Lloyd has accepted the position of assistant professor of English at Wayne University, Detroit.

ARS POETICA

By assiduous REsearch I keep finding the most surprising things. In the Twickenham MSS., file ZQ1988623Gwiz, I came upon the following version of a celebrated passage in the "Essay on Criticism." It is not in Pope's hand. Though on 18th century paper, it sounds modern to me. Can anyone account for it?

—Norman Foerster

True Wit is Nature to Advan-
tage drest,
What ne'er was Thought, and
therefore not Exprest;
Something, whose Truth we
dimly Guess we find,
Through words — we hope —
that Image that one Mind.

I'VE BEEN READING

Members are invited to contribute reviews of books, old or new, which they wish to call to the attention of other English teachers. Professor J. Gordon Eaker, the Assistant Editor, is in charge of I'VE BEEN READING. He is Head, Department of English, Jersey City Junior College, Jersey City, N. J.

Comments on reviews will be welcomed.

MOBY DICK

Moby Dick is a parable of man's eternal strife. The story is told in terms of whaling, but told with such intensity and passion that the spiritual encounter is never forgotten in the material. It may be read as a narrative of incredible wonders; it may be read as an allegory of the timeless turmoil between sense and spirit; or it may be read as a parable of a conflict in which *Moby Dick* is the great enemy of the human race. The whale is a symbol of the true nature of man. "He is the deepest blood-being of the white race; he is our deepest blood nature. And he is hunted, hunted, hunted by the maniacal fanaticism of our white mental consciousness..."

Captain Ahab is the incarnation of the "maniacal fanaticism" of man's mental consciousness. Man never ceases to make war on death and misery. He was committed to this struggle for the survival of his soul at the foundation of the world. Ahab's first fatal encounter with the White Whale typifies man's first fatal disobedience in the paradise of Eden. Man ate of the forbidden fruit and brought the curse of death upon the world; Ahab pursued the White Whale with a vengeance and submerged his fellows in the strife. "The White Whale swam before him as the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them... That intangible malignity which has been from the beginning... all the subtle demonisms of life and thought... He poured upon the Whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down..."

It is impossible to give a completely satisfactory definition of the White Whale. To the crew of the Pequod he is a monstrous ivory Leviathan among the creatures of the sea. He is to be hunted for profit. On another plane he is to the crew a terrifying enemy to be avoided. Ahab's men, who are

representative of all mankind, are quite ready to cease from the search for the White Whale, for such an expedition is fraught with danger. But Ahab's passionate hatred for the whale encompasses the destiny of the crew, and they rekindle their spirits to press the hunt for *Moby Dick*.

Among men there are ever to be found Ahabs who do not rest until they meet in mortal combat the enemy of their souls. All Ahabs have the same passionate hatred for their deepest blood-natures, to which hatred they give utterance in one voice: "That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the White Whale agent, or be the White Whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him."

Man's struggle against the power of death and darkness does not end with the death of Ahab. The lesson man learns from the parable of the whaler is that an epoch-making victory was won over the Leviathan of darkness and death. When Ahab firmly set the Pequod's course toward the sea-home of the White Whale, he had conquered the *Moby Dick* of his "deepest blood-being." Ahab's death marked the beginning of a new campaign against the demon in man's nature. The soul of Ahab is abroad in the world marshalling the forces of mankind for the final battle for universal human freedom from fear of the inner man.

C. H. Connor
Shenandoah College
Dayton, Virginia

Poets of Christian Thought by Henry M. Battenhouse (Ronald Press Company, New York, 1947).

It must be more than just a far cry from the thirties when in a graduate course this reviewer's paper on a theme similar to that of Battenhouse's work was judged by students and professor alike as a subject unworthy of scholarly consideration. Perhaps, this book is symptomatic of a change that is taking place in the nation's thought — the realization that the only fortress and sure defense against the materialistic and brutalizing forces rampant today is a stout faith in the power of the spirit to resist and finally overcome such forces.

Certainly, no fact is more discernible than that from Caedmon down to T. S. Eliot every major poet has set down in diverse forms his insight of whence we came, why we are here, and whither we are going. It is heartening to be reminded through this author's lucid exposition that such poetic giants

as Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, Emerson and Eliot all felt intuitively that this world is built on spiritual foundations and will endure in spite of what man does to man.

Though it may appear invidious, this reviewer feels that a study of Donne's and Herbert's religious poetry would have been more rewarding than a scrutiny of the moral twitterings of some of Shakespeare's characters.

Although a small book, Mr. Battenhouse glowingly succeeds in introducing the reader to the power and glory of Christian poetry.

Samuel I. Herbster
Jersey City Junior College

Our Threatened Values, Victor Gallanz. Henry Regnery Company. Hinsdale, Illinois, 218 pp. (The American edition appeared in February, 1948, and is listed at \$2.50.)

This political-moral essay was the Progressive Book Club selection for January, 1948.

Arguing that every man—regardless of race, creed, or color—is a part of every other man and deserves the respect of every other man, this is a sort of *For Whom The Bell Tolls*; tracing the history of man's inhumanity to man since World War Two this book is an abbreviated *Why Men Hate*; displaying an uncommonly healthy regard for all men everywhere, it is another "A Man's A Man For A' That".

Mr. Gallanz' thesis is that hatred is on the move. Like Samuel Tenenbaum (*Why Men Hate*), he seems convinced that there is no peace on earth and little or no good will to man. Man's hatred of man as evidenced in the treatment of the German people is a madness which is rampant in varying degrees throughout Europe, and unless it is halted it will end by destroying us. That, in a word, is Mr. Gallanz' message to England and to the world.

The fate of Germany will very largely decide the fate of Europe and perhaps the world. The mistreatment of Germany is stupid, for the privations, indignities, and disease to which Germans are subjected may lead to wars of vengeance. And as to the age-old English custom of considering conquered peoples as her subjects, Mr. Gallanz says flatly, "Colonialism must go."

There must be respect for personality, for it is the essential value that includes all the other values. This value recognizes the equality of all human beings and will, if allowed to, save the world. The threatening of this value has aroused the

author, who warns his homeland that its indifference toward respect for personality has brought England face to face with a moral crisis, graver perhaps than the physical crisis of war.

Ever lucid, ever urbane, Victor Gallanz has the courage of his sometimes unpopular convictions.

J. Randolph Fisher
Georgia State College
Savannah, Georgia

AMERICAN INFLUENCE

(Continued from Page 1)

tive works—sometimes as much as 90% of the novels were translations, and only 10% original. American, English, French, Russian, German, Spanish authors were found to be more entertaining than Italian novelists. It can truly be said that the Italian reading public of the present generation is one of the most cosmopolitan and internationally-minded. It is still more impressive to find that this development took place under the rabidly nationalistic rule of the Fascist dictatorship. But that is merely another symptom of the established fact that Fascism did not succeed in altering profoundly the Italian Liberal tradition, which continued its course notwithstanding all blandishments and threats. In the end this cosmopolitanism became so marked that the Fascists had to do something about it. There was a literary weekly which published a chart of best sellers, somewhat like the one published by the New York Times Book Review, only that the latter is divided in two classes, Fiction and General, whereas the Italian one was significantly divided into original works and translations. The number of translations in the New York Times chart is so small—about two or three out of 32—that it is not worth while to class them apart. But in Italy there were and are so many, and the public is so interested in them, that they cannot be ignored. It finally became apparent that the Italian public was reading more translations than original works. So the Fascist authorities ordered the weekly to stop publishing its chart of translations. That is all they did. They did not try to stop the flow of translations, provided of course they were not anti-Fascist or Jewish or some other obnoxious type; they merely tried to hide the fact of their popularity. This again shows Fascism as a curious compromise, lacking the thoroughness of the Nazi tyranny.

During the war this flow of

translations was slowed down, but never came to a stop. Before the war, some authors had been translated not only in single volumes, but in complete works: for instance, the complete works of Eugene O'Neill had been made available. During the war, translations of works by Herman Melville and by such modern authors as Steinbeck continued to appear. The translator of Steinbeck, by the way, was Eugenio Montale, one of our leading modern poets, who is well versed in English and American literature, and who was director of the Florence Viesses Library. This library is the main lending library in Florence, and has always catered to the English-speaking residents of Florence. Montale made it a storehouse of modern English and American writers, until his political independence—he never joined the Fascist party—became offensive and he was dismissed from his post. Well, during the years 1942 and 1943 he was engaged in translating *Grapes of Wrath* by Steinbeck. He did it with extreme care, and more than once he asked my help in translating some piece of American slang—a help which sometimes I was able to give him, sometimes not. We puzzled over the cryptic expressions of lumbermen's argot at the marble-topped tables of the Caffè delle Giubbe Rosse, the cafe that was and is the resort of the Florentine literati. As the war came nearer, these meetings of the Caffè did not cease, but discussions became more and more concerned with the advance of the allied armies and what damage actual warfare would bring to the city. Finally, as the noise of cannon became louder and louder, and the fate of Florence hung in the balance, I found again my friend Montale at the Caffè still sitting at his table and nervously consuming one cigarette after another while he was reading another American novel—but this time it was a detective story. I have never known him to read that kind of fiction before or since. He admitted frankly he did it merely to escape from the tension. He would not even discuss the situation with me. He turned back immediately to the adventures of Philo Vance.

As regards what may be called the classics of American literature, they had been nearly all translated before the first world war. By classics I mean the principal works of Benjamin Franklin, Washington Irving, Longfellow, Edgar Allan Poe, Emerson, Hawthorne, Walt

Whitman and some other nineteenth century writers, such as Fenimore Cooper and Mark Twain. William James was translated and discussed during his own lifetime; and so was another American philosopher, Josiah Royce, and even John Dewey, though the pragmatic tendency of his thought was rather alien from the current of Italian philosophy. On the other hand, Henry James had begun to attract attention just before the second world war; he is now being extensively translated. Among modern novelists, Hemingway, Dos Passos, Thornton Wilder, Saroyan and others were already being translated. Indeed it is easier to say who was not being translated than who was. Following this method, I will say that the one American novelist of the present generation who was not translated was Thomas Wolfe. Doubtless by this time the omission has been rectified. Whole anthologies of American short stories have been recently translated, one of them at least very well: the Pocket Book Anthology of American short stories, which includes such classics as Hemingway's *The Killers* and Ring Lardner's *The Champ*.

So that the passion for translations, and in particular for translations of American books, was well established long before the American army landed in Italy.

Nor were they limited to fiction. Other American works of a popular character became well-known also in Italy: for instance, the books of Van Loon were all translated, popular books on science and mathematics and invention, and books like Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends* and Pitkin's *Life Begins at Forty*. It is likely that scientific and technical works were also translated, but I can only refer to work of a literary or general character.

There were only one or two cases in which the Fascists interfered with these translations. The most notable of these was the ban placed on Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms*, owing to the unfavourable account of the Italian army after the defeat of Caporetto in the other war. Needless to say, this book has now been translated and is easily available anywhere. But the Fascists did nothing to check interest in Negro literature. The study of poetry written by American Negroes became quite a fad among certain literary groups. In modern days, two volumes of translations have actually been published of Negro poetry, while well back in

the thirties the literary review *Circoli* dedicated an entire number to modern American poetry, giving both texts and translations.

Napoleon Orsini,
Duke University

Teaching is a Privilege

Oral reports are often an ordeal for students. In my class for engineers, there was a young veteran who has just returned to school and was struggling to become accustomed to a hip-length artificial limb. When the time came for oral reports, he asked permission to make a written rather than an oral report and gave his reasons. Getting up from a chair was a task; the creak of leather and metal fittings made him feel conspicuous; besides, he was, as yet, unsteady on his feet. Naturally, I readily granted his request, but I mentioned that—later—schooling himself to talk before a group would be to his advantage. The assignment was taken from Naylor's book, *Informative Writing*, and consisted of technical exposition in describing a device, analyzing its functional units and recounting the purpose it served. Frequently, students used the board to draw illustrations of a device or brought specific objects to class to use in their talks.

On the day the oral reports were due, this particular student volunteered to give his report orally. Quietly, ably, from well organized material, he spoke to an unusually quiet and attentive class. The subject he had chosen was "Prosthesis, An Adequate Device Which Enables Amputees to Resume Normal Living." He used his mechanical limb as the device for analysis, and he stated the purpose and fundamental principle of operation, treated of the principal functions, units, analyzed each into component parts, and explained the effectiveness of the instrument in accomplishing the purpose for which it was devised. With those who listened, the veteran had shared the gratifying experience of another "mission completed."

Ethel Fleming
University of New Mexico

Chicago C.E.A.

This Group has plans for a Spring Meeting. Ernest Van Keuren, University of Illinois, Navy Pier, is President.

Maryland, Delaware, District of Columbia C.E.A.

This Group is planning a meeting for the Spring. T. F. Marshall, Western Maryland College, is President.

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AMERICAN LITERATURE

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Edited by

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Volume II: 1860 to the Present

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(Book IV of Volume II, *American Literature Since 1900*, will be available separately.)

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RETROSPECT

(Continued from Page 1)

literature" seems to have taken the shape of a so-called historical survey, which developed gradually into a critical consideration of a number of the supposedly greatest figures. The number of authors treated ranged greatly — from the 144 of Cleaveland to the **Eleven British Writers** of a recent compilation. There doubtless was some deviation from the pattern, but it seems to have been almost universally followed up to the time of the first world war.

About that time the so-called types approach was advocated. I well remember the discussion which followed the appearance in 1925 of the 1144-page McClelland-Baugh "Types of English Literature" better known as the **Century Types**, and the enthusiasm with which many greeted it. But the sophomore mind had not changed, and the enthusiasm waned.

Meantime, following the **Saturday Evening Post** article of H. G. Wells complaining of the parochial character of our history teaching, and the publication of his immensely popular "Outline of History", arose a new interest in what was beginning to be called world literature. But far from representing that noble conception of **Weltliteratur** which Goethe long before envisioned, most books purporting to represent world literature consisted of scraps and slivers from the so-called classics of the European tradition, in translations which varied in quality from magnificent to contemptible, with a remarkable liberal representation of the Anglo-American contribution. All these new ideas brought a diversification of the introductory course.

Quite recently there has been proclaimed the gospel according to St. Johns. For the past several years we have heard its prophets at Annapolis and Chicago publish the evangel of great books. There are to be sure, as with all idealisms, virtues in it, but some of us think that a good book is like good English, not an absolute but one which must be good at a certain time, at a certain place, and for certain people. If it be not great for me — what care I how great it be. I am frequently amazed — and dismayed — at the human love of absolutes and superlatives. As I was preparing this paper, I received an announcement which states:

"English and American writings — both being part of our literary heritage — are included chronologically to reveal their

essential similarities as well as their obvious differences. More than any other anthology, this book provides the student with the **best literature in English.**"

At Colgate we have been bitten by still another bug — the Spirit of the Contemporary. We were told a few months ago that there is a young man of 1947 who differs markedly from the young men of 1937 and who, I suppose, has now yielded the stage to the young man of 1948, whose reading is doubtless confined to the journal bearing that name. In the past several years we of the English department have devoted thought (at least we think it's thought) to the problem of when the contemporary began, and we have instituted a number of courses which we believe to be contemporary, but which for the most part in our uncertainty we call modern.

Now I believe thoroughly in the contemporary, but I am reminded of a colleague of mine who some years ago was an enthusiast for contemporary literature. He was authorized to announce and teach a course. Naturally he began to be assailed with questions about every new book which came out. Very soon he was replying with dejected mien, "Listen, I teach contemporary literature; I don't read it."

An earlier day equated literature with belles lettres; the newer conception of literature as the autobiography of a nation or a culture has given us such works as the Warfel-Gabriel-Williams book **The American Mind** and the Christy-Wells **World Literature**. The trouble with this broadening of our horizon is that it still further multiplies the already too numerous materials from which we must choose all too few, and, if we are making an anthology, tempts us to greater inclusiveness of specimens, which tends to result, even in a two-volume thin paper too-small-print book of a couple of thousand pages, in greater scrappiness.

One way of escape has been the substitution of a smaller number of whole works for the two-ton king-size quarto of selections. The inauguration of such series as the Scribner Modern Students Library, the Harper Modern Classics, the Modern Library was a boon. But these, alas, are no longer cheap books. The more recent discovery that readers in this country have been paying too much for pasteboard has brought us a wide variety of usable texts in the Pocket books, the Penguin

books, and now in the splendidly conceived Rinehart editions. These offer us a chance to show the sophomore that literature is not measured by avoiddupois.

But a new danger has arisen. Even before the introductory course has emerged from its pioneer stage of confusion, it is threatened with extinction. A mighty wave of the future, which struck the West Coast some years ago and which has overwhelmed the Middle West, is now threatening to engulf the East. We are threatened with extinction through integration. At Colgate a postwar committee some years ago went into the silence and emerged with a new required three-hour sophomore course integrating painting, sculpture, photography, music, and literature. We are now struggling to combine all these ingredients into a toothsome hash, and the course will first be offered next year as the **piece de resistance** on the sophomore bill of fare. Elsewhere literature is being dropped into an Irish stew called "the humanities", a fusion of philosophy, history, and whatever one may choose.

Many years ago a friend of mine rushed up to me in great excitement and said, "I have discovered the perfect definition of progress in education." Naturally I asked him what it was. With eloquent gestures he replied, "Progress in education consists in constant advance from slogan to slogan." The latest slogan in the collegiate world seems to be 'general education', which is the twin brother of integration. Seeking to save our students from the

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evils of specialism, we are now following a new group of curricular regimens. Some folks fear that the harvest may be a group of students who have learned everything in general but nothing in particular, but probably the effects will not be so frightful as they imagine. Many slogans have swept the educational field without doing material damage to the two essential factors in education — the student and the teacher. Whether our attack be historical, by types, through "Great Books", or otherwise, student and teacher remain.

To me it seems that our two greatest enemies are the intellectual immaturity of the student and the inadequacies of ourselves as teachers. The causes of the first are familiar to all of us; comic books, radio, movies, automobile yield a pitiful cultural harvest for the amount of time they consume. The socialized school, however effective it may be in attaining a number of worthy objectives, does not, with its devotion to sports and social activities, cultivate either the ability or the inclination to read. The American home, threatened with disintegration and cursed with "Momism", even at best does not bring much grist to our mill. A few years ago my college classmate, Charles Francis Potter, made for the American Publishers Association an investigation of the typical American home library. It was a sad, sad tale. The result of all these changes in our civilization has been what one psychiatrist has called *adult infantilism*, which carries on from adolescence to the years of supposed reason. About all this, teachers of literature in college can do little. We must simply grin and bear it.

But perhaps our greatest enemy is ourselves. The discussion this afternoon illustrates an important part of our problem. We talk at great length about kinds of introductory courses, about methods of instruction. Here, as so often in life, it is not an either-or which confronts us. Good method, like good English or good literature is not an absolute. One must ask good for whom? good in what place? good under what circumstances? I have no doubt that the great-books method is successful at St. Johns. That does not mean it would be successful everywhere. In 1886 at the first meeting of the Michigan Schoolmasters' Club the late Calvin Thomas said, "If I can trust my own observation, a person's reverence for what is

commonly called method usually varies inversely with his own intellectual breadth". For myself I should accept that with the alteration of the last part of the statement to read "varies inversely with his thoughtful experience".

I believe that the method is the man or woman — Sir or Madam, as the case may be. We must learn from others, it is true, and alien theories of teaching do sensible people no lasting injury. I at any rate can take Mortimer Adler in stride as I took Nick Carter in my boyhood. But I am reminded of an ancient postcard I once found in the files of the Early Modern English Dictionary at Ann Arbor. It was written by W. W. Skeat, the well known scholar, to Sir James Murray, the famous editor of the Oxford Dictionary. Writing to explain a new etymology which he had just found, Skeat, after his explanation, added a last sentence which showed his joy in the discovery. The sentence was "I found it out myself". There are lots of things a teacher must find out himself. The chief concern of a teacher of English in my judgment should be to broaden and live his own knowledge and understanding of language and literature and of their relationship to life. He should read incessantly and voraciously, even if that means throwing some student papers in the wastebasket and cutting some committee meetings. Last week the philosopher Arthur Murphy spoke on our campus on "The Function of the Philosopher". After the lecture I remarked to a friend the title should have been "A Defense of Poesy". Mr. Murphy began by quoting that well-known line of Wordsworth which in paraphrase I used as the opening sentence of this paper. He followed this with frequent literary allusions and made his final point by a quotation from Goethe's *Faust*:

Wer immer strebend sich bemüht
Den können wir erlösen.

We must stuff ourselves so full of the best that has been said and thought by men that we shall be in the position of the late Ernst Sihler, famous teacher of the classics. When he was thanked by a graduate student for what he had given him in a certain course in Latin, Sihler tapped the stripling on the shoulder and said, "Young man, I have been giving you teaspoonfuls out of my hogshhead". To fill our hogshhead we must give ourselves a broad and deep acquaintance with the world's literature.

By that I do not mean merely the European tradition. As John Osman said last year at the Tulane conference on the humanities, "We have long recognized in the West that we should know the *Dialogues* of Plato, the *Divine Comedy* of Dante, the *Notebooks* of Leonardo da Vinci, the *Capital* of Karl Marx, and the *Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin if we are to understand our Western tradition. The time is at hand when the intelligent Westerner must also know such books as the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the *Book of Tao*, Buddha's *Sermon at Benares*, and the *Koran*, if he is to be a 'citizen of the world.' And a citizen of the world the teacher of literature should be. I would add the *Araucana* of Ercilla, the *Fuero* of Sarmiento, the *Dona Barbara* of Gallegos, and a number of others of our southern neighbors, not forgetting the Nobel Prize winner, Gabriela Mistral.

All this, of course, is for the hogshhead, not the teaspoon. We shall never be able to include even the essential books in our teaching, and we must guard ourselves against the temptation of discounting the familiar which Henry L. Mann so well states in his letter published in the April third issue of the *Saturday Review of Literature*. Commenting on the review by William Rose Benet of Quintana's *200 Poems*, which Mr. Benet had condemned as being too familiar, he says, "In this particular 'construct' the general reader is the college undergraduate coming from a prose-conditioned world and who is being conducted into the mythical realms of poetic society. Since Mr. Benet's plaint is that he has 'rarely read so many accepted things said in so colorless a way', he must be reminded that what is commonplace to the votary may be revolutionary to the neophyte."

Our selection of literary materials from the vast treasury of the world's literary wealth must be made in terms of the time at our disposal for the introductory course together with a careful consideration of what it *good*, that is — stimulating to further reading for the sophomore, rather than in terms of our own somewhat jaded attitude as literary sophisticates. We must accept our limitations of time and space. "Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room." We must teach with energy and kindness, with humility and enthusiasm.

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